Narrator:

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In the past eight years, U.S. trade with sub-Saharan Africa has more than doubled. At the same time, American companies and workers have found new opportunities to do business in Africa — providing inputs and expertise to aspiring African entrepreneurs, participating in joint-venture partnerships, and increasing American exports and investments.

America's Deputy U.S. Trade Representative, Demetrios Marantis, delivered this news in a February 16th speech at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. Makerere is Uganda's largest and oldest university, established in 1922 as a technical school, and has today gradually grown into a full university.

The United States has helped foster Africa's expansive trading capacity through the 2000 African Growth and Opportunity Act, or AGOA, Marantis said. U.S. imports and exports from the 38 AGOA-eligible nations totaled over $104 billion in 2008, a 28 percent increase from the previous year. The trade growth is being driven by several key economic sectors, including machinery, automotive vehicles and parts, wheat, non-crude oil products, aircraft, and electrical machinery, which includes telecommunications equipment.

The United States has worked hard to ensure that African nations have the resources they need to seize the benefits of trade. "Trade-capacity-building assistance is a critical element in the effort to help African countries turn trade opportunities like AGOA into exports," Marantis said. In addition to improved trade and investment since the inception of AGOA, the United States has established four regional trade hubs in sub-Saharan Africa with the U.S. Agency for International Development. The hub in Nairobi, Kenya, serves all of East Africa, including Uganda. There, Ugandans can receive AGOA-related training and technical assistance. Trade support provided by the Nairobi hub is estimated this year to have produced well over $14 million in export sales for East African businesses.

At the center of AGOA are substantial trade preferences that allow all marketable goods produced in AGOA countries to enter the U.S. market duty-free. But Marantis also added that, despite the progress achieved, Africa benefits too little from global trade. He said some progress in trade liberalization has been made by sub-Saharan African nations, but Africa's overall trade policies remain the world's most protectionist. Average African tariffs are nearly 20 percent. This is compared to just over 10 percent for the rest of the world, and 5 percent for industrialized countries, he said. To change this situation, Marantis said,

African nations must continue to adopt broad economic and trade reforms to enhance their ability to attract foreign capital.

New challenges are rising as other nations, especially in Asia, are becoming more competitive in the global textile and apparel markets, he added, and with the expansion of bilateral free trade and economic partnership agreements. The situation calls for new trade policies, and Marantis said the United States is committed to establishing them.

At the 2009 AGOA Forum in Nairobi, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said the United States wants to be Africa's partner and not its patron. Africa accounts for 2 percent of global trade; an increase of 1 percentage point would generate additional export revenues annually that would be greater than the annual amount of assistance that Africa receives.

At a time when many of the critical challenges that nations face are global in nature, three American scientists are setting out on separate journeys to Muslim-majority countries to expand new partnerships in science, medicine, engineering and technology. They are part of a new Science Envoy program that President Obama announced in his June 4th, 2009, speech at Cairo University, where he also called for a "new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world."

The first envoys will visit Muslim-majority countries from North Africa to Southeast Asia from January through May. Future science envoys will travel to other regions as the program expands.

Ahmed Zewail is one of the envoys. Zewail is a professor of chemistry and of physics and director of the Center for Physical Biology at the California Institute of Technology. Zewail began his mission January 10th in Egypt, where he was born and studied at the University of Alexandria. He will also travel to Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, meeting with heads of state, government officials and representatives from the scientific, education and business communities to seek opportunities for partnerships.

Elias Zerhouni is a professor of radiology and of biomedical engineering at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland, and a senior fellow in the Global Health program at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. He received his medical degree at the University of Algiers School of Medicine before coming to the United States, and is a member of the board of trustees of the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia. Beginning in February, Zerhouni was traveling to Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi and Qatar.

Bruce Alberts is a professor emeritus in the University of California-San Francisco Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics. From 2000 to 2005, he co-chaired the InterAcademy Council, an advisory institution in Amsterdam governed by the presidents of 15 national science academies. Alberts will travel to Indonesia in May.

Alberts is passionate about science education, especially for young people. He knew almost nothing about international science until serving two six-year terms as president of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, he said. But after attending a "science summit" on world population in New Delhi, India, in October 1993 with representatives of national academies of science throughout the world, he became interested by a second issue besides science education, he said. This issue is the ability of scientists around the world to do more together than alone.

The envoys will investigate opportunities in all areas of science and technology, including mathematics, engineering, health, energy, climate change research and green technologies. They also will identify the strengths of and gaps in scientific institutions and offer recommendations. Each scientist will carry his own experience and interests into the mission.